

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Tuesday, 25 August 2015 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr T MacLennan
Mr B Clark	Mr B Murphy
Mr B Gormley	Mr B Thompson
Mr A Henderson	

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr C Kemp, Area Community Services Manager, Community Services
Ms M Cameron, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr M Leary, Assistant Area Manager, Community Services
Mr E Boyd, Principal Engineer Energy & Engineering, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr K Masson, Policy Coordinator - Climate Change, Chief Executive's Office
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector C Gough, Area Commander South Highland, Police Scotland

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr T MacLennan in the Chair

Business

Preliminaries

Ro-fhiosrachadh

In accordance with Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that Item 17 on the agenda (Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Programme) be taken immediately following Item 7.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 9 – Mr Baxter (Non-Financial)
Item 13 – Mr Murphy (Financial)
Item 16 – Mr Thompson (Financial)

3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2015 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Area Committee.

4. Police – Performance Summary
Poilis - Geàrr-chunntas an Dèanadais

There had been circulated Report No LA/18/15 dated 30 July 2015 by the Highland South Area Commander for Police providing a local summary update to Committee Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-17 Policing Plan.

Following a presentation of the report, Members discussed the following:-

- the importance of digital mapping of accidents and the need for suitably trained officers;
- recruitment problems and the resultant shortage of sergeants for the Area Command;
- the unsuitability of the A82 for the Deloitte Ride Across Britain event which would bring approximately 800 cyclists through Lochaber on 11 and 12 September 2015. In this regard, suggested that Police Scotland should be asked to give consideration to use of the A9 for the event in future years;
- concern was expressed that Police representatives were being asked to provide repetitive updates to Members, for example at Ward Business meetings and at Area Committees;
- further detail on the CONTEST Counter terrorism strategy was sought and provided, including the definition of a 'person of interest';
- an update on work to address potholes on the A82 between Spean Bridge and Glengarry to be provided to Mr Baxter;
- measures in place to combat antisocial behaviour were considered; and
- the changing culture in relation to drink driving was acknowledged.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress report and updates in relation to the 5 Priorities: Road Safety, Alcohol and Drug Abuse/Misuse, Antisocial Behaviour/Disorder, Crimes of Dishonesty and Protecting People;
- ii. **AGREED** to write to the Chief Constable to ask for officers to be trained in the use of digital accident mapping equipment; and

- iii. **AGREED** to inform Police Scotland of the view of the Committee that the A82 was not suitable for the Deloitte Ride Across Britain event and that in future years consideration should be given to use of the A9 as an alternative.

5. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Committee Performance Report for 2015-16** **Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn 2015-16**

There had been circulated Report No LA/19/15 dated 12 August 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, together with the accompanying Lochaber Area Performance Report, providing an update on progress against the priorities outlined in the Area Committee Plan for Lochaber 2015-2016. Priority areas were identified through a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities delivered in partnership to reduce risk to the communities in Lochaber. The report also contained previously agreed information and performance as requested by the Committee.

In this regard, Members expressed concern about recruitment in rural areas and sought information for a future Ward Business Meeting on the number of incidents which had not been tackled by the 'first in line' team. Also in relation to the insufficiency of Fire and Rescue Service personnel, information was sought on whether this had a detrimental impact on fire insurance policies.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Area Performance Report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that information be sought from the Fire and Rescue Service for a future Ward Business Meeting on: the number of incidents which had not been tackled by the 'first in line' team; current recruitment activity; and the effect of insufficient Fire and Rescue Service personnel on fire insurance policies.

5A. **Urgent Item – Inclusion of Lochaber in Highland-wide Programme**

In accordance with Standing Order 17.2, the Chairman AGREED to consider the following item of urgent business, in light of the need to have it considered by the Council on 3 September 2015.

Members pointed out that the Highland-wide Council Programme contained a separate page on Inverness City and Area and it was considered that a similar page should be included to detail priorities for Lochaber. In this regard, it was suggested that a Working Group of all Lochaber Members should be established to take this forward as a matter of urgency.

The Committee therefore **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council inclusion of a separate page within the Programme to detail Lochaber's priorities and that a Working Group of all Lochaber Members should be established to progress this as a matter of urgency.

6. **Capital Projects – Investing in the Lochaber Area** **Pròiseactan Calpa – A' Tasgabh ann an Loch Abar**

There had been circulated Report No LA/20/15 dated 17 July 2015 by the Director of Finance listing the capital projects included in the Capital Programme being

delivered in the Lochaber area in the financial year 2015/16 and the in-year budgets for these projects.

During discussion, the following points were considered:-

- there was a need for further information on the £52k annual budget for the A861 Drynie Hill project;
- the £46k for Invercoe bridge was for land acquisition and project design; and
- concern was expressed at the lack of information in the report and in this regard it was suggested that more detailed and comprehensive information should be provided in a future report to a Ward Business Meeting with Officers in attendance to answer queries on the projects which had been listed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the budgeted capital projects being delivered in the Lochaber area in 2015/16; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a more detailed and comprehensive report should be presented to a Ward Business Meeting within a month with Officers in attendance to answer queries on projects.

**7. Planning Guidance for Rum and Land Adjoining Aonach Mor Access Road
Stiùireadh Dealbhaidh airson Rùm agus Talamh Ri Taobh Rathad Cothruim an Aonaich Mhòir**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/21/15 dated 10 August 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure outlining the context for, and content of, detailed planning guidance produced for the Isle of Rum Community Trust (IRCT) for Kinloch on Rum, and for land either side of the Aonach Mor base station access road, owned by Forestry Enterprise Scotland (FES), an agency of Forestry Commission Scotland.

Changes to the style of local development plans meant that community groups and major landowners could draft plans for their communities to provide additional detail or to address an appetite for land use change. The IRCT and FES plans were the first of this new style. The IRCT Plan related to the settlement of Kinloch and a single property at Harris, while the FES Plan related principally to the creation of luxury tourist accommodation which would address an identified gap in the market and complement existing plans for tourism-based economic development opportunities in that vicinity.

During discussion, Members made the following points:

- in relation to the proposed FES development, a guarantee was sought that a high quality development would be provided;
- it was vital that an adequate level of Developer Contribution be sought at the appropriate time in the planning process, with various suggestions for use of any contributions being put forward;
- in relation to housing in the vicinity, this would be addressed through the Local Development Plan process;
- a rail halt in the Nevis Range area would be useful, although it was explained that this would require support from Transport Scotland, as well as the rail

companies, which may not be forthcoming, being detrimental to passengers on longer distance journeys. Extended bus timetables were a more feasible transport option;

- consideration was given to whether a separate briefing at Ward Business Meetings had been necessary; and
- various issues relating to the A830 link road were considered, with Members being informed that the project was included in the Council's capital programme but without a funding commitment and that land had been safeguarded for it in the existing local plan. It was proposed to safeguard a line for it again in the new local development plan, although this was open to challenge from landowners. The next step for the road project was to seek funding for the initial design work.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the thorough plan formulation and consultation processes used by IRCT and FES to produce the guidance;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Isle of Rum Community Land Use Plan as Interim Supplementary Guidance pending its incorporation within the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan as Interim Supplementary Guidance pending its incorporation within the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan.

17. Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Programme Prògram Rothaireachd, Coiseachd agus Sràidean nas Sàbhailte

There had been circulated Report No. LA/31/15 dated 30 June 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure inviting Members to approve the projects delivered through the Scottish Government funding for Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets (CWSS) for the Lochaber area, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Whilst welcoming the Ballachulish Primary project, it was requested that Local Members receive early sight of the detailed plans prior to consulting with the Community Council so that they were informed and prepared to answer any queries that might arise.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the CWSS/Safer Route to Schools Project detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that the Road Safety Unit would continue to work with schools to develop further Safer Route to Schools Projects for future years; and
- iii. **AGREED** that detailed information on the plans for Ballachulish Primary be emailed to Local Members prior to the Community Council Consultation.

8. Draft Fort William Town Centre Action Plan Dreachd Phlana-gnìomh Meadhan Baile a' Ghearasdain

There had been circulated Report No. LA/22/15 dated 11 August 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure outlining responses to the public consultation on the Draft Fort William Town Centre Action Plan and presenting a finalised version for Members' approval. The purpose of the Action Plan was to

highlight projects that could be delivered should funding opportunities arise, or where planning applications might help to make these a reality. The Plan would also place the town in a strong position to compete for funding opportunities that might come forward. The finalised Action Plan was contained in Appendix A of the report and a summary of comments received and recommended responses were set out in Appendix B. Following approval by the Committee, the Action Plan would become non-statutory Supplementary Guidance, which would be a material consideration in development management decision-making and a useful tool in supporting funding applications.

Members praised the positive attitude shown by members of the public during consultation. Other issues discussed included:-

- owners of private properties on the High Street should be urged to undertake repairs to their shop fronts;
- the proposal for a Harbour Authority was at the early stages of consideration and could impact positively on the town;
- a meeting would be sought with Sustrans in relation to access to the Fort and the waterfront; and
- the Community Empowerment Act would provide more opportunities for local community groups.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Fort William Town Centre Action Plan at Appendix A of the report as non-statutory planning guidance;
- ii. **AGREED** to the Action Plan being treated as a material planning consideration for development management purposes;
- iii. **NOTED** the comments received during the Fort William Town Centre Action Plan consultation;
- iv. **AGREED** to the recommended Council responses contained in Appendix B of the report; and
- v. **AGREED** that private owners be urged to undertake repairs to their properties in the Town Centre.

9. Kinlochleven High School Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Àrd-sgoil Cheann Loch Liobhann

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest as his children attended Kinlochleven Primary School and Nursery but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No LA/23/15 dated 10 August 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning providing an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Kinlochleven High School (KHS) Associated School Group and providing useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

Following a summary of the report, Mr Sam Clark, who was retiring, was thanked for 30 years' service to Ballachulish Primary School. Members sought information on the number of leavers from KHS going on to further education locally as opposed to

leaving the area, given the increase in provision of courses at the West Highland College. In relation to the slight decrease in pupils going on to higher education, it was pointed out that there were annual variances. Members were given assurance that the recruitment problems being experienced in the Gaelic Medium nursery in Ballachulish were being addressed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to provide Members with information, if available, on the number of leavers from KLHS going on to further education locally as opposed to leaving the area.

**10. Winter Maintenance Priority Network - 2015/16
Plana Obair-càraidh Geamhraidh - 2015/16**

There had been circulated Report No LA/24/15 dated 7 August 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing information on Winter Maintenance service provision and inviting Members to agree the network of Primary and Secondary Priority routes within Lochaber.

Following a summary of the report, Members considered the following issues:-

- it had been the consensus of the Lochaber Area Committee to refuse the winter maintenance priority gritting routes for Lochaber for the coming year;
- in relation to the specific streets which had been downgraded from Secondary Priority Routes, it was confirmed that downgradings had been mainly as a result of amendments to the type of vehicle used to transport children on those routes in keeping with the agreed policy. In this regard, it was suggested that Community Councils should be informed in writing if their roads were to receive a reduced service in future, with Local Members copied in on the correspondence;
- there was some concern that the number of qualified drivers who were required to deliver the policy was insufficient;
- it was vital that all drivers were given appropriate checks when recruited;
- Lochaber should have 4-5 pavement tractors but in fact only had 2 and this was not considered to be a fair allocation, particularly in view of the importance of pavement clearing;
- the availability of trained drivers and fully-serviced equipment should be included in future reports;
- flexibility on the use of staff was extremely important;
- discussion ensued on the benefits of having tight timescales to meet road treatment targets, versus increasing the number of roads to be treated and lengthening the treatment times;
- the use of farmers to help with winter maintenance was due to be implemented this winter; and
- the lack of a pedestrian footbridge over the railway at Eastern Tomonie was thought to be a safety issue given the level of development and a report on this was requested as a matter of urgency, as the matter had been raised at previous meetings.

At this point, the Committee agreed a short adjournment to allow consideration of specific aspects of the report in relation to the Winter Maintenance priority network for 2015-16 and definitions contained within the Winter Maintenance Policy.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Community Services Committee that, in regard to the priority gritting routes for Lochaber, a review of the Winter Maintenance policy should be undertaken to remove any ambiguities over the definitions relating to the secondary routes, including the definition of small communities, and to provide the necessary resources to deliver the policy effectively;
- ii. **AGREED** that information on equipment, Officer skill levels and Officer availability be included in all future reports;
- iii. **AGREED** that Community Councils for all areas subject to reduced Winter Maintenance should be informed of the changes in writing;
- iv. **AGREED** to investigate the fair allocation of pavement tractors across areas in the Highlands; and
- v. **AGREED** that a further report should be presented to the next meeting on issues relating to developments at Eastern Tomonie, to include the pedestrian capacity and safety of the railway bridge.

**11. Grounds Maintenance Performance Monitoring Report
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh a thaobh Cumail Suas Raointean**

There had been circulated Report No LA/25/15 dated 11 August 2015 by the Director of Community Services detailing performance management information of the Grounds Maintenance Services from April to June 2015.

During discussion, Members considered the following:-

- clarification was sought, and received, on the notice period for rectifying breached standards and in this regard disappointment was expressed at the number of contractors who still failed to meet this for grass cutting;
- the poor pass rate of inspections for Grounds Maintenance (excluding grass cutting) carried out in-house was highlighted and the reasons for this were requested; and
- given that there was already a vacancy for a Community Works Officer, it was questioned how the monitoring and recording of performance could be achieved if this was migrated to area teams, with concern expressed that the team was already overstretched.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the performance management and remedial action information provided on the grounds maintenance service as set out in the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the management action taken to address the performance issues identified; and
- iii. **AGREED** to review required service standards at future Ward Business Meetings.

**12. Transport Programme
Ath-sgrùdadh air Seirbheisean Bus**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/26/15 dated 13 August 2015 by the Director of Community Services informing Members of the consultation process which was planned for autumn 2015 in advance of the re-tendering of bus service contracts across Highland in 2016. The process would include a Member Briefing and a public consultation event in Lochaber.

Members discussed the following points:-

- the importance of bus services, in particular for the health centre, workplaces and out of catchment school pupils. Consideration was given to rural residents and shift workers, and investigation into car sharing schemes was suggested;
- consultation with major employers as well as the Chamber of Commerce and the Lochaber Transport Forum was proposed;
- two public meetings in different locations would be preferable to one; and
- consideration should be given to links with other main destinations and to the type of buses used to ensure that they were fully accessible.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the planned consultation programme and the outline timetable and key steps for the forthcoming tender process which were being recommended to the Community Services Committee; and
- ii. **AGREED** to seek information on car sharing schemes for rural areas from HiTRANS, with a view to providing them to relevant Community Councils.

**13. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2015-30 June 2015
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2015 – 30 Ògmhios 2015**

Prior to discussion of this item, and with the consent of the Chair, Mr B Murphy sought information on the financial approval limits of Housing Maintenance Officers and whether this remained a factor in delays in tackling voids. In this regard, it was explained that the policy for this had recently been amended to give Senior Housing Maintenance Officers a higher approval limit.

Declaration of Interest: Thereafter, Mr B Murphy declared a financial interest as a temporary accommodation provider and left the room for the remainder of the item.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/27/15 dated 6 August 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing information on how the Housing Section had performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the first quarter of 2015/16.

During discussion, Members commended the Lochaber Area Housing Officers for their exemplary work and sought investigation into the replacement of a fence at a property at Lochside with appropriate material.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on Housing Performance in the period 1 April to 30 June 2015;
- ii. **AGREED** to commend the Lochaber Area Housing Officers for their exemplary work; and
- iii. **AGREED** to investigate the replacement of a fence at a Council property at Lochyside with material other than post and wire.

**14. HRA Capital Programme Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Calpa HRA**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/28/15 dated 11 August 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing information on the status of the Housing Revenue Account Capital Projects within the Lochaber Area.

During discussion, Members sought further information on progress with the cavity wall insulation on properties in the Plantation, including letters that some residents had received with conflicting advice, and progress on renovation to timber-clad properties in Caol.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the status of current capital projects contained in the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that further work was needed to explore possible external funding for Phase 2 of the external insulation work at Plantation; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Members should be provided with an update on renovations to timber-clad properties in Caol and progress with cavity wall insulation in the Plantation.

**15. Highland Council Scottish Housing Quality Standards Energy Upgrading Process Briefing Report
Aithisg Brath-ullachaidh mu Phròiseas Leasachaidh Lùtha Inbhean Càileachd Taigheadais na h-Alba aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/29/15 dated 7 August 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure providing an outline of how the Council had assessed the requirements for upgrading of Council houses to comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standards for energy efficiency.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was welcomed that the technical study to examine consumptions of new heating systems was to commence in the Winter as this would ensure that the correct heating systems were being installed and that they were fit for purpose;
- there had been difficulties with the first tranche of heat pumps which had been installed and it was hoped this could be addressed as part of the technical study;
- tenants who had wooden and laminate flooring incurred additional expenditure when new heating systems were installed as such flooring needed to be lifted and the possibility of establishing a discretionary grant was suggested; and
- congratulations were expressed that the partnership programme between Highland Council and E.ON Energy Solutions, bringing major energy savings

to hard-to-treat properties in fuel poverty parts of the Highlands, had won 'project of the year' in the National Green Deal & ECO Awards 2015.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

**16. Carbon Clever Community Grant Fund
Maoin Thabhartasan Coimhearsnachd Càrboin Chiallaich**

Declaration of Interest: Mr B Thompson declared a financial interest as far as it related to the Knoydart Foundation on the grounds of being a Director of a Company who might benefit as a consequence of an award and left the room during discussion of the Knoydart application.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/30/15 dated 11 August 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform setting out the applications received for the Carbon CLEVER community grant fund in Lochaber for 2015-16. It also detailed the background to the fund, together with a summary of applications, the assessments and funding recommendations.

Whilst supporting the applications, Members sought to strengthen governance and asked for more robust justification of applications in future against the Fund's criteria.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. the funding recommendations, totalling £10,734.38, as follows:-
 - Knoydart Foundation - £6,934.38 with conditions
 - Mallaig & District Swimming Pool - £3,800
- ii. to defer a funding decision on Spean Bridge Community Hall's application until the next meeting and, at that time, and if funding remained available, to make a decision on whether to promote another round of funding in the current year or to carry it forward into 2016/17;
- iii. that the revenue costs of £1,620 detailed in the Knoydart Foundation's application be considered under the Ward 12 Discretionary Budget at the next Ward Business Meeting; and
- iv. that future reports should contain more comprehensive justification for recommended awards.

**18. An Aird Trust – Appointment of Trustees
Urras na h-Àirde – Cur Urrasairean an Dreuchd**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/3215 dated 10 August 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform seeking homologation of the appointment of Mr T MacIennan and Mr B Murphy to the An Aird Trust.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the appointments accordingly.

**19. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Area Committee held on 21 May 2015, which had been approved by the Council on 25 June 2015.

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm.